

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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REDWOOD NATIONAL AND STATE PARKS

Fall Prescribed Fire Activities in the Bald Hills

Redwood National and State Parks will conduct a series of prescribed burns this fall in the prairies, oak woodlands and conifer forest of the Bald Hills east of Orick. The prescribed fire season in the parks begins in late September or early October as weather conditions permit.

While the wildfire season has been active in the western US, the coastal climate of northwest California is transitioning to cooler days and nights, higher relative humidity, increasing fuel moisture, and lower fire danger levels. These changing conditions mark the transition to prescribed fire season where prescribed fires are utilized under specific weather conditions that allow for effective fire control and achieving specific management objectives. This year fire will be used as a management tool in four specific burn units in the Bald Hills: Upper Airstrip, Lower Airstrip Expansion, Eastside Prairie, and Childs Hill Prairie. All four units combined total 793 acres.

For thousands of years, Yurok, Tolowa, Chilula, and Hupa people managed prairies and oak woodlands, and some coastal areas that are now within the parks with periodic fire to keep them open. Intentional burning provided grazing and hunting areas for elk and deer, maintained important resources like tanoak trees and various basket weaving materials, kept trail and travel corridors open, and lessened the prevalence of parasites like ticks in the prairies. Early settlers who homesteaded the prairies continued the practice of broadcast burning until it was outlawed by the state in the 1930s. Since then, many of the prairies and oak woodlands have become encroached with Douglas fir and other conifers which can eventually eliminate these important plant communities.

The parks' 2010 Fire Management Plan provides for the use of fire to restore natural and cultural processes, manage exotic plants and conifers encroaching into prairie and oak woodland plant communities, and to interpret and educate the public about the role of fire in the parks. The parks have successfully used prescribed fires to achieve these objectives since the early 1980's.

If you are in the parks over the next couple of months, there will likely be additional activity and equipment on and near Bald Hills road. Smoke may linger on the roadways and traffic control may be in place. Please be cautious for your safety as well as those working on the prescribed burns.

For further information, please contact John McClelland at (707) 465-7732.

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